

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

REPORT NO. [REDACTED]

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INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY Hungary

DATE DISTR./2 February 1949

SUBJECT "Betty Granshaw" Broadcast

NO. OF PAGES 3

PLACE ACQUIRED [REDACTED]

25X1A6a

NO. OF ENCLS.
(LISTED BELOW)

DATE ACQUIRED BY SOURCE January 1949

25X1A2g
SUPPLEMENT TO
REPORT NO. [REDACTED]

DATE OF INFORMATION January 1949

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CPYRGHT

(Text)

Here is Betty Granshaw, a British girl studying in Hungary, to read you her weekly letter to her mother at home.

"Dear Mother: Thank you so much for your nice long letter. It was so good to read all about your Xmas at home. What a lovely surprise that Uncle Bob turned up just in time for the Xmas dinner. I can imagine what it meant to Father after not having seen him all these years. By the way, I found your description of Jim deep in preparations for his first date on New Year's Eve absolutely priceless; the young man must certainly have changed -- he didn't care much for dancing when I last saw him.

"Well, to tell you about myself. I am studying really hard these days; apart from attending the various lectures and doing some reading and studying at home, I've enrolled for a special evening course in psychology -- a subject which has always interested me greatly as you know, but which I found impossible to fit in with all the rest of the daytime lectures I attend. Also, I am getting on like a house on fire with my Hungarian, which certainly seemed hopeless at the beginning.

"Well, speaking of the language reminds me that I must tell you all about the Hungarian film called 'Our Bit of Land' that I saw last night. I had heard it praised before seeing it, but I never expected it to be quite as good as it turned out to be. It was well-nigh perfect, both technically and artistically, and the acting was superb. The film tells of the life of Hungary's peasantry before the liberation, of their bitter struggles for a bare livelihood, of grinding work, day in and day out, of their hopes and dreams through the blind drudgery of their day.

"It is the story of their bit of land which, by the work of their own hands, might someday become truly fertile. There are times when they feel that they too are human beings and that their life holds a future. But these hopes are born only to be destroyed by the malice and greed of the rich peasants who not only refuse their help to the poor but devise means of tricking them out of what is theirs. Or again, it is the inclement weather against which they are defenseless that blasts all their hopes. And when these small peasants turn for help to the rich land-owner for water from the canal that supplies his ornamental fishpond, which could so easily and at no less to the lord be deviated to water the tiny bits of parched land bitten by drought, this help is denied them.

"For me, the chief virtue of the film lay in that the greatest care was

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taken to avoid any kind of exaggeration in both the acting and the production. Perhaps just because I'm so enthusiastic about the film you will gather from my account that it was a one-sided, highly exaggerated propaganda film. But no. It was true to life, restrained and beautiful in its dignity, and gave even those who knew but very little about conditions of the peasantry in Hungary before the war the feeling that this and worse had been the lot of these hardworking country people. The actor playing the principal role is really a peasant boy, not more than 22, and he's only a student at the Academy of Acting. And yet I think I can truthfully say that I've never yet seen a piece of acting as good and as devoid of all mannerisms as his was in this splendid film. Speaking of films, Laurence Olivier's "Hamlet" was given its first preview here yesterday, and I am one of the very many who are keen to see it.

"Oh, Mother dear, before closing I must tell you all about the lovely idea which was carried out here during the Christmas holidays, and of which unfortunately I heard about only after New Year. In almost all the nationalized factories and enterprises, men and women workers worked in their free time to make toys and gifts for their own children, those of colleagues and poor peasant children. That's the nicest idea I've heard of for a long time. One of my acquaintances, who works for the Democratic Federation of Hungarian Women, told me about it but too late, for I would have loved to enlist in the drive either knitting or carving. Remember the doll carving I tried my hand at five years ago at home? I'm sure I could have been of some help. This movement of toys for Christmas for the workers' children was shown in the newsreel the other day, and you should have seen the smiling faces of the men and women at work. In one factory they were making wooden dolls, trucks, etc., carving (seay?), painting, and the women were busy sewing baby clothes and wrapping. In another place paint boxes were being prepared, trains, funny-looking Jack-in-the-boxes; at a third place women were bustling about the canteen kitchen baking, making sweets, coating sweetmeats with icing, wrapping the parcels, giving happiness to others and enjoying themselves in the bargain.

"Well, dearest, it's goodbye again for this week for I must be off to give my English lesson to the Horvath boys. Love to you all, bless you,

Your loving daughter,

Betty"

Budapest in English at 1820 EST, 14 January 1949

CPYRGHT

(Text)

"Dear Mother: Yours of the 10th arrived this morning, and I was rather disappointed at its being so short, but I can quite understand that you haven't had much time these days, what with consoling Aunt Mary now that Jim has been called up and warned that he might be sent to Malaya. I'm very distressed. Poor kid -- he's just out of school.

"As for my big bit of news -- I'm going on my travels again, this time to Vienna on a sporting holiday with a couple of other students, and we hope to be able to compete in skating with some students there. We've been practicing in the biggest outdoor skating rink here which is almost the size of Trafalgar Square. Since figure skating was never my strong point, I've specialized in speed skating, and after our daily two-hour training I certainly come home with a voracious appetite and feeling very fit. Of course, we're all greatly looking forward to the whole event, as well as to the trip itself. We're leaving on Sunday morning and will be away for about 10 or 12 days. Don't worry -- I shall not fail to write to you from there. We also hope to do a bit of sightseeing, and it will be fun to get to know the Austrian students, compare views and see what life is like there. We're taking no chances with food and have decided that each of us will take a pound of salami, a cheese, a box of dry cakes and a big loaf of bread so that we can have a snack whenever we feel hungry.

"Oh, I forgot to mention in my last week's letter that I was out of town last weekend. A group of us went to visit one of the provincial universities in the town of Debrecen. We had a very enjoyable time, attending an interesting lecture on Saturday afternoon and a concert with the local symphony orchestra

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in the evening. We spent Sunday morning doing some swimming at one of the indoor pools there. Later we made a tour of the university which ended up with a splendid lunch given in our honor.

"In the afternoon we visited the farm of a model farmer who has just been awarded a prize by the Government for his good and rational work. He is one of the new landowners, a dear old man of about 60, very proud of his achievements and of his family of six, three of whom are working in factories in Debrecen, two studying at the university, and one, his youngest son, is the old chap's righthand man at home. They specialize in the breeding of pigs and in poultry farming. We had tea, or rather a cup of coffee, with the family in their newly whitewashed kitchen, were shown and duly admired the newly installed electric stove, and the new kitchen furniture, and then had a long chat. They are full of plans for the future. They are expecting to join a cooperative. One of the boys is studying to be a teacher, another is very keen on his work in the paper factory, where by attending a night course he is specializing himself in one branch.

"The journey home was rather tiring. We travelled home with a number of soldiers returning to town after their leave, and so the train was very crowded. One thing that struck me was that here the officers and the men travelled the same class and eat at the same tables in the restaurant car, just as they do in the barracks, rather different to how they do things at home.

"Do you know that my friend Hannah's wedding is taking place tomorrow? It is to be at 12:00 A.M. at a church quite near to where we live. They both got leave, of course, and are going skiing to the Tatra Mountains in Czechoslovakia for their honeymoon. I have already been to see their two-room flat which is all ready and waiting for them.

"I am afraid that's all for today, Mum. Love to you all,

Your loving daughter,

Betty"

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